



Springfield-Greene County
Health Department
Helping people live longer, healthier, happier lives

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From the Office of the Director of Health

Safety Urged with Thanksgiving Food

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 76 million Americans suffer from foodborne illness each year. Many of these illnesses can be prevented with safe food handling.

To protect your family from foodborne illness this holiday week, follow these food-handling guidelines.

- Shop only at inspected and approved stores.
- Do not buy canned products that are dented, bulging, rusty or leaking. This may indicate the food has become contaminated or bacterial growth has begun inside the can.
- Buy only cold items that feel cold and frozen foods that are frozen solid. Add cold and frozen foods to your cart last. Take them home and refrigerate them as quickly as possible.
- Keep a thermometer inside the front of your refrigerator to ensure the internal temperature stays at 41°F or below. Make sure there is plenty of room for air to circulate around refrigerated foods.
- Thaw meat on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator, with a tray underneath it to catch any drips.
- Clean and sanitize your hands and food prep areas before you begin cooking. Wipe down countertops with a mild bleach solution of 1 teaspoon common household bleach to 1 gallon of water.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water before, during and after handling food.
- Be sure food is cooked thoroughly. Turkey should be cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F. If traveling, cook the turkey completely, then cover it tightly with foil. When you arrive, reheat it in a 325°F oven until both the turkey and stuffing reach an internal temperature of 165°F.
- Pack cold dishes in an ice-filled cooler. If you're precooking something that should be served hot, prepare it the day before and then cover and refrigerate overnight. The next day, carry it in an ice-filled cooler and reheat before serving.
- Stuff the turkey just before roasting it. The bacteria that cause food poisoning grow rapidly at temperatures between 40°F and 140°F. Don't overpack the stuffing, or it won't reach 165°F by the time the turkey is done.
- Refrigerate all leftovers within two hours of cooking them. Remove turkey meat from the bone and place it in shallow containers in the refrigerator to cool quickly and evenly. Store stuffing separately from turkey.
- Reheat leftovers to at least 165°F and be sure to eat them within three days or freeze them immediately.

For more information on holiday food safety, visit the Springfield-Greene County Health Department Web site at <http://health.springfieldmogov.org> or call (417) 864-1658.

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